5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
SQ19 Tucano SQ19
CUBEU



593 A brother and a sister who are close to one another in age and who show a fondness for one another are regarded as being linked in a bond that is both warmer and more specialized than the normal bonds between a brother and a sister. The girl is spoken of as "belonging" to her brother. The boy prepares a manioc garden for his sister and she in turn barters a good part of her farinha production in his behalf, getting him fishhooks, ammunition, jewelry, and items of clothing. He will always bring something for her. If he wishes to act as host in a drinking party his assigned special sister has a particular obligation to assist in the preparation of chicha. They do not exchange the ordinary male-female foodstuffs since that is strictly a connubial form of reciprocity and the unmarried are part of their parents' household. They do simulate a conjugal relationship, though, in that they reportedly allow themselves the intimacy of external coitus (i.e., without intromission). On the other hand, since the girl has been allotted to her brother to be part of an exchange marriage, he assumes the right to offer his sister's sexual favors to persons of his choosing, although, as in the case of an exchange marriage, he cannot force her to accept a man against her will.

[244] [437] [273] [261] [592] [835] [836] [583]

593 583 As the Cubeo explain it, the purpose of the brother-sister relationship is to provide for the boy's marriage. Since the most desirable marriages are those in which brothers exchange sisters, a boy, they say, must have a sister assigned to him if he is to have a strong bargaining position. The Cubeo do recognize the validity of a material bride price, but very few families will readily yield a daughter merely for objects. They want a daughter-in-law to replace a daughter. Exchange marriages are complicated because it does not often happen that the exchange can be immediate. The delay in completing an exchange transaction calls for a reliable guarantee that the agreement will be adhered to. For this, several recourses are available. The ultimate recourse is force. The aggrieved party will raid a household that has reneged and hope to abduct a bride, or, more commonly, love magic will be used to lure the girl away. The most assured contract is one involving cross-cousins, since it draws upon the absolute probity of relationship between a brother and a sister, who are always principals in such a marriage negotiation. But even this has a loophole in that the girl must be willing. By and large, it is the attitude of the bride-to-be that the Cubeo regard as unpredictable. If she enters upon a marriage with reservations that are not removed soon after she has been taken to her husband's community she can be counted upon to run home and stir up complications. The special brother-sister relationship is intended to guard against this. On one

583 58

[593] [593]

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
SQ19 Tucano SQ19
CUBEO



hand, the assigned sister can be counted on to act in her brother's behalf and to accept the exchange marriage. On the other, if his bride should leave him he believes that he can ask his sister to leave her husband so that accounts will be squared. This arrangement does not work perfectly, but it works well.

Not every young man has a sister assigned to him. The son of a headman who is in line for the succession has preference, as has a favored son, since it is the parents who play an important part in establishing this relationship. In the case of an apparent heir to the headmanship the assigned sister enhances his status in two ways. It makes him part of an adult status economic relationship in that he has a woman "working" for him and it smoothes the way for his marriage.

I could get no term for this rather specialized brother-sister relationship. Ordinary relationships between brother and sister lack the specific economic exchange features. Lacking the intensity of the paired relationship, the ordinary relationship is still charged with considerable emotion.

From the point of view of the sib, the brother-sister relationship may be considered as a source of holding women to the sib even after they have taken up residence in another sib. There is the curious expectation that a woman will some day come back to her own sib. She will do this as a widow or after a break in her marriage. When a young man is on his way to his "affinal" sib to bring back a wife his parents say to him, half in jest, "Try to make your sister come home." The symbolic act of marriage for the Cubeo is the drama of a "marriage by capture." The groom seizes the bride, who protests, and carries her forcibly to the beach and into his canoe. Her outcries bring her kinsmen on the run, who then try to prevent her "abduction" by cudgeling the groom. This dramatic enactment makes the point that the bride is unwilling to leave her sib and that her kin are determined not to let her go. It is a strong demonstration of attachment that soothes the feelings of the sib and particularly of the brother. It satisfies the sentiment that no one wishes to leave the sib.

The relationship between brother and sister may also be considered in the context of the sib origin myth which states that the founders of a sib were always a brother-sister pair who only later entered into exchange marriages. The tradition of the *Bahikiwa* sib that a woman re-established the sib after all her brothers had been killed by enemies illustrates still again the Cubeo sentiment that a woman really belongs to her sib. Thus a sib has a female ancestress as well as a male ancestor.